

# STOP being the ears of people with hearing loss in denial

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One of the most aggravating aspects of living with an individual with hearing loss, who is in denial (*everyone mumbles they say*), is constantly repeating your self, speaking louder, or interpreting the world for them. There is a way to release yourself from this maddening co-dependent relationship and at the same time to motivate your loved to seek help for their hearing loss.

Dr. Richard Carmen (Auricle Ink Publishers, Sedona) has done a masterful job of offering help to family members in his book How hearing loss impacts relationships: Motivating your loved one. In addition as advisor to the Better Hearing Institute he offers suggestions on our website under the title "When a loved one resists help".

I encourage all people caught in the trap of being the ears for their loved one to read Dr. Carmen's book and his advice on this website. But let me summarize the key aspects of how you can set yourself free:

1. Understand that being the ears of your loved one is not an act of love.
2. Assisting loved ones in denial is counterproductive and encourages co-dependent relationships. Continuing to give help could lead to your loved one's failure in life as well as impact many aspects of their quality of life such as performance on the job. It is important you understand the areas impacted by untreated hearing loss as documented on the Better Hearing Institute website.
3. And remember if you continue to help them why should they seek help?
4. Make it your ULTIMATE goal to have your loved one hear independent of you; and don't do it alone. Get your entire family and their friends in your corner in a productive conspiracy to get your loved one in denial to finally realize they have a hearing problem.
5. Dr. Carmen's practical tips are: **STOP repeating yourself! STOP raising your voice! STOP being the messenger by carrying the communication load for the family! In essence this means, STOP BEING THEIR EARS!**

Here is one very clever intervention that could set you free. Explain to your loved one as follows in a calm, loving, non-condemnatory voice:

*The whole family has had a talk. We believe you have a hearing loss and in the past we have helped you by speaking louder, repeating ourselves, or interpreting what other people have said. In effect we have become your hearing aid. But we realized this might*

*not be the most loving acts we can do for you. We love you very much and want you to get help for your hearing loss. So from now on we will move toward stopping repeating ourselves when you say "Huh" or "What did he say?" and we will move toward no longer speaking louder so you can understand us. Instead we will simply say the words "**Hearing Helper**" (or choose another signal word that has meaning for your family) before we give you help. This is our signal to you that you have just asked us to be your ears. This is our way of demonstrating our love for you — that is by showing you how many times you ask for help. So for X period of time (e.g. a few weeks) we will continue to help you but we will preface our help with the words "Hearing Helper"...we think in a short period of time you will realize how many times you seek our help in hearing."*

Many loved ones in denial will soon realize how much they use your ears; when this happens they will seek help. Encourage them in their journey to a world of better hearing. And enjoy your new found freedom!

**(Note: this advice is ONLY for people in denial and who have not sought help for their hearing loss)**